

# **The Modernization of Election Campaigns and Its Research Opportunities in Indonesia's Direct Elections Era**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Elections have changed significantly since 2004 in Indonesia when citizens for the very first time voted directly for their national leaders. The changes seen not only at the significant participations, either in the electorates or in the political parties contesting the elections, but more so on the way campaigns were conducted. Political parties and individual candidates have run campaigns in a way that has a deep involvement of political marketing, scientific research, political consultants, and professionalization of strategies and the messages conveyed to the voters, to which often referred to as modernization of campaign. Professionalization of campaigning has given a new face of electoral politics in Indonesia, where crafting persuasive message to woo the public is much more important than the substantive and ideological policy preferences offered to the people. Individual popularity becomes a dominant factor for elites to compete for political positions through election. This calls for investigation, because what happens during campaigns will influence the rest of electoral process and the results accordingly. This paper is aimed at exploring the modernization of campaigns theory, observing its practices in Indonesia, and categorizing its thematic research opportunities in the context of Indonesian direct elections.

**Key words:** campaign research, direct elections, election campaigns, modernization

*Interact:*

Vol.4, No.2, Hal.

98-113. November 2015

Prodi Ilmu Komunikasi,

Unika Atma Jaya

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The paper was presented at the 2nd International Conference on Corporate and Marketing Communication (ICCOMAC). Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia-Jakarta, October 2015. The writer is a lecturer at the School of Communication, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia's democracy has seen a new way of doing politics since the reformation era, where mass communication is deeply involved in the political processes due to the significant change of freedom of information and of the press. At the same time, the loss of political institutionalization for over 30 years has cost the nation of political crisis despite the intensifying of new spirit in making democracy works once and for all. The institutional political crisis consequently has brought us the emergence of personalization of politics, where the center of power does not lay in the strong structure and regulations of the democracy itself, but on the individual popularity. This causes a dire trust on the political institutions including the House of Representative and political parties – the worse among others – that would lead to low political participation especially during election days. At the same time, the changes in the electoral system such as the parliamentary threshold requirement, the presence of independent candidates, and the shift from proportional system to recently winner-takes-all tendency lead to tighter competition among contenders in the elections. Campaigning becomes a backbone of strategic communication of parties and candidates to ensure electability. Today, election campaigns secure its essential position in our representative democracy.

There are, at least, four reasons to the significant importance of election campaign communication and of its urgently serious study accordingly. Firstly, campaigning is a process where parties and candidates communicate their visions, missions, and programs to the voters. Secondly, campaigning recommends decision makers and policy (Mancini and Swanson, 1996), from which voters can learn how to participate in developing the nation. Campaigning is a type of voter education where citizens really get the experiences how democracy is practice. It is also a time for the citizens to judge and weigh the parties and candidates' merits to be voted based on their leadership, integrity, and competence. Thirdly, campaigning creates the element of competition in the election as a fundamental qualification of healthy democracy. Competitions push each candidate or party to work harder and to nominate only the best candidate they have, not how close he/she is to the party chairperson. As at least two competing sides are present, voters are served with options where to choose from which sustains rigorous decision making. Fourthly, campaigning is a means to increase participation of the citizens to vote, given the steep decrease of party ID recently in this country.

In regards with persuading voters, the problem today is that most political parties and candidates only concern with campaigning when the elections is around the corner. Parties don't really care of their members as to not involve in any immoral and illegal actions, until they got caught by law officers. Member of the parties also don't stick to their promises and political leans after being elected as members of the House of Representative or other positions. Unfortunately, it is not seen as necessary yet, because parties and candidates have a propensity to think that they would always find their ways to woo voters when elections come, which are often carried out off the rule of the game.

In line with the empirical observation, studies on election campaigns are still very rarely in Indonesia until today, despite the tremendous changes it has brought and resulted in the government formed after the elections. So, it would be very challenging and interesting to firstly map the research potential of election campaigns by drawing main concepts from the literature, and put the concepts into the context of campaign communication in Indonesia's democracy to suggest research opportunities about the phenomena.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **a. Political campaign**

What is political campaign? Political campaigns can be defined as organized communication efforts by parties, candidates, government institutions, or special interests organizations which seek to influence the outcome of processes of political decision-making by shaping public opinion (Schmitt-Beck & Farrell, 2004: 3). There are three objectives of political campaigns: 1) to mobilize support among the mass public; 2) to persuade citizens of campaigners' causes; and 3) to inform the citizenry about public policies and political activities (Schmitt-Beck & Farrell, 2004: 1).

Election campaign is just one type of political campaigns. Three other types of campaigns are referendum campaign, single-issue campaign, and image campaign (Schmitt-Beck & Farrell, 2004). If in the election campaigns indicate parties and candidates wage battles for votes and political offices, referendum campaigns show proponents and opponents of related issue seek to navigate the vote in their preferred direction. For instance, the government of Ireland held referendums in 2015 on two proposed amendments to the Constitution of Ireland which included reducing the age of candidacy for the President of Ireland from 35 to 21 years old. Another case happening in Indonesia in 1999 is a referendum was held to decide on the dispute of Timor East province. Furthermore, issue-based campaign is a type of campaign conducted by government agencies or interest groups to increase the visibility of a policy or issue and be covered in favorable frame in the media. Campaigning for go-green policy to support public to plant trees is an example for this campaign. The last types of political campaign, image campaigns, see efforts to increase popularity and positive perception of the public over political actors. Running for positions in organizational leadership highly likely applies this kind of campaign.

The development of political campaign has been categorized into three phases. They are pre-modern campaign, modern campaign, and post-modern campaign (Farrell & Web, 2000: 104; Farrell, 2006: 126). Differences between the three stages could be highlighted based on campaign preparation, use of media, campaign organization, agencies and consultants, source of feedback, campaign events, targeting of votes, and campaign communication.

Some significant characteristics of the first stage of campaign are the types of media used (direct and indirect), campaign organization which is composed of local party organization with staff mainly coming from the parties itself and strong candidate-based support and voluntary. Direct media include party press organizations, newspaper ads, billboards, and so

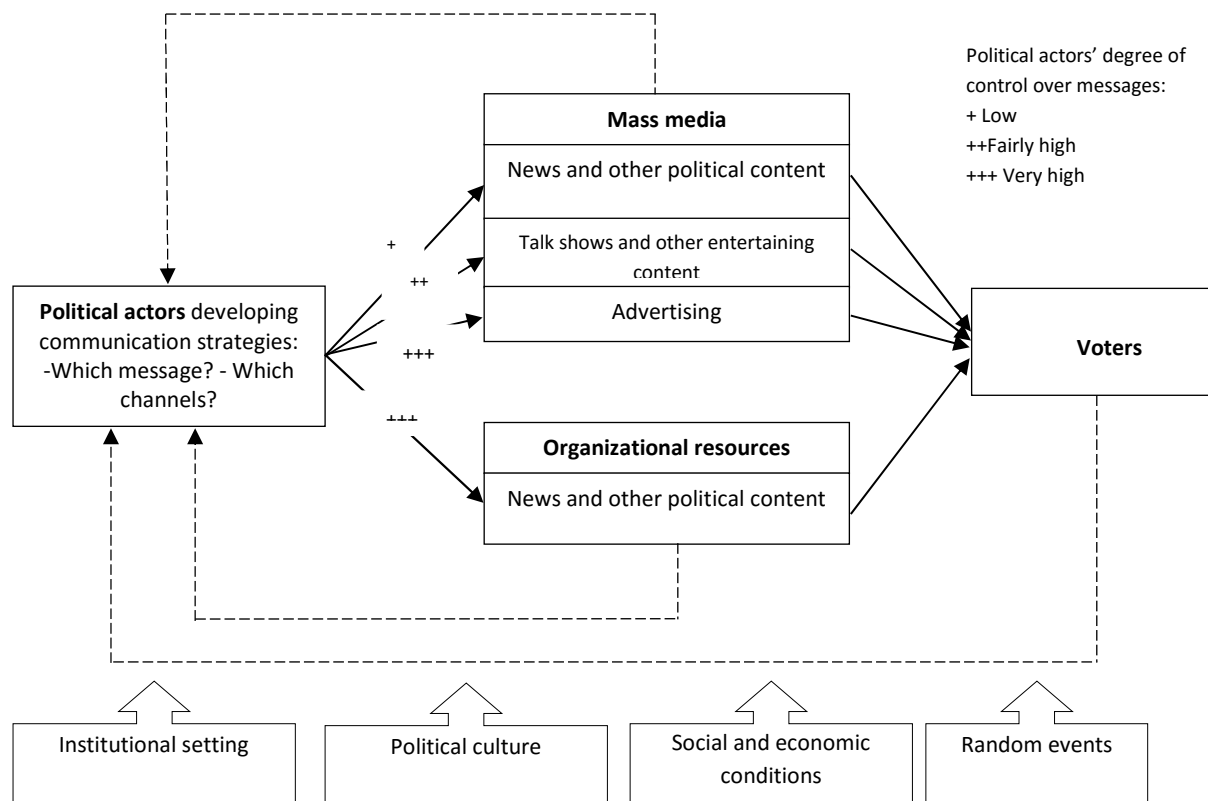
on, whereas indirect media may include newspaper coverage. Hence, direct media mean campaign communication media that are fully controlled by the parties or candidates, contrarily indirect media are campaign communication channels that are beyond of parties' control. Also, politicians are fully in charge that sees a minimal use of consultants and agencies. The main campaign events are public meetings and whistle-stop tours.

The second stage of the campaign is characterized by a strong emphasis on the indirect media such as public relations approach, media training, and press conferences. Its most direct media is advertisement campaigns. The staff is composed not only of the party-based membership, but also of paid professionals. Politicians are still in charge, yet a growing prominence of specialist consultants is present where large-scale opinion polls are utilized as a source of data. Main campaign events are TV debates, press conferences, and "pseudo-events" where the target of the campaign is to catch all prospective voters.

Furthermore, emphasis on the direct media is seen in the third stage of the campaign development such as targeted ads, direct mail, video mail, cable TV, and internet. Other characteristics that differentiate it from the second stage are the staffing which use more professional, contract work, consultants, with event much higher dependence on the polling technique to support its communication strategy as political marketing with the target of specific or segmented categories of voters.

In practice, we can observe the administration of election campaign as a systematic process involving actors, medium, message, and targeted recipient. Media are seen as independent factors to the success of the campaigns considering other variables are being equal. Schmitt-Beck and Pfetsch (1994), as quoted in Schmitt-Beck & Farrell(2004: 6) created a model to show how campaigns are administered.

**Figure 1: A model of Campaigning**  
**(Quoted from Schmitt-Beck & Farrell, 2004: 6)**



As represented by the sign + campaign actors have low control of the dissemination of the message through that media, and the sign +++ shows very high control by the campaign actors. The assumption is that the more controlled media by the campaign actors are mobilized the higher the chance of success of the campaign communication, and the other way around is deemed true.

Today, election campaign communication enjoys a wider option of channels available, thanks to the advent of the unprecedentedly interactive new media. In terms of channel, we can categorize types of campaign communication channels into binary spectrum: controlled and uncontrolled channels (Karlsen, 2009).

**Tabel 1: Channels of Mediated Campaign Communication**  
(Quoted from Karlsen, 2009: 31)

Media technology	Party control	
	Uncontrolled	Controlled
<b>Press</b>	Independent newspapers	Party newspapers, pamphlets, newspaper ads
<b>Broadcast (Television and Radio)</b>	Television news, radio news, etc.	TV spots/ads
<b>New Media (ICTs)</b>	Online newspaper, independent blogs, etc.	Parties' and candidates' website

## **b. Modernization**

A wide agreement among scholars of political campaign suggests that modernization is a conceptual entry point to study election campaign with its worldwide development and replication (Mancini and Swanson, 1996; Schmitt-Beck & Farrell, 2004; Farrell & Webb, 2000) to which commonly refers to as Americanization. Modernization, in sociology, is the transformation from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to a secular, urban, industrial society. To modernize a society is, first of all, to industrialize it. Historically, the rise of modern society has been inextricably linked with the emergence of industrial society (britannica.com).

Similarly, Giddens (1998: 94) defines modernity as a shorthand term for modern society, or industrial civilization. Giddens goes on emphasizing modernity is associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as open to transformation, by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy. Modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order with more technically complex of institutions.

Furthermore, Niklas Luhman (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 7) defines social complexity in two dimensions: structural dimension and symbolic dimension. Structural dimension comprised of the increasing functional differentiation within the society, the growing number of sub-systems, and become more specialized, and the systemic interactions are more complex. Meanwhile, the symbolic dimension can be observed through the fracturing of citizen identities and citizen affiliations with multiple microstructures with its own symbolic reality. The increasing functional differentiation brought about by modernity slides down into the political process in many levels of structures, practices, and mechanisms into the political institutions and processes including into campaigning practices.

Generally there are five elements of modern campaigning, namely personalization of politics, “scientificization” of politics, detachment of parties from citizens, autonomous structures of communication, and the shift of role from citizenship to spectatorship (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 14).

### **c. New Media and Online Campaign**

The selection of medium or channels is one among the most strategic decisions that political parties and candidates have to make. Conventional media have several limitations in the context of electorate relations such as the presence of gatekeeper controlling the flow of news in a way that benefits the media, the limited if not absence of feedback, the political-economic interest of the media, commodification of political information, and the capital intensive nature of media use excluding small parties to get exposed publicly.

The advent of new media has given hope for much more democratic structure of campaign communication especially through its plentiful social media platforms. New media can be defined as those forms that combine computing and information technology, communication networks, and digitized media and content information that lead to convergence (Flew, 2005: 2). One type of the new media is social media. A way to define social media is proposed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). They argue, social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Two most powerful characteristics of new media with its 2.0 version are interactivity and connectivity. Connectivity does not only boost participation from voters but also provide field for lay citizens to publish and share information that are available to any one being online and connected to the internet. The interactivity nature of the new media supports bottom-up aspiration flow to be heard and promoted by the elites. Citizens can also easily give feedbacks and responses to elite actions deemed inappropriate or would be damaging to the society.

Campaigning through social media is commonly meant to increase awareness and sentiments of the public of political brands, either in the form of candidate figures or political parties. Variables that are often applied to measure social media campaigns are mentions (total of mention of names or parties), sentiment (favorable or unfavorable), reach (total followers), exposure (numbers of followers’ followers), and engagement (frequency of interaction). Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blog or website are most favored platforms for online campaigns these days.

### **d. Direct Elections in Indonesia**

Direct election was introduced for the first time in Indonesia in 2004 for presidential and legislative elections. Put simply, direct election is a kind of election in which citizens vote

directly, instead of having representatives who vote for them (Cambridge Dictionary). There are two significant changes in the Indonesia's direct election to this day. They are: first, candidates are directly chosen by the voters from the lists in the ballots; second, there has been a much tougher competition because candidates coming from the same parties have to compete with their own colleagues in order to win due to the direct voting.

### **3. Election Campaigning in Direct Elections Era of Indonesia**

Modernization of election campaign has dominated campaign activities over the last ten years in Indonesia. The increasing immersion of political marketing, survey, and political consultant or campaign professionals is so rampant during legislative, presidential, and even local elections. Survey organizations are taken as the new element of democracy in this country. Moreover, thanks to its skyrocketing presence and influence, main survey organizations decided to form an association to promote credible survey activities under the name of *Persepi* (The Indonesian Association for Public Opinion Surveys), which declared its membership as obliged to formalized ethical standards. There are 26 survey organizations in its membership lists in its official website (see the table). The survey organizations run what is called as scientificization of politics during elections in this country.

From its early presence in our elections up to now, surveys have been rapidly used for main political objectives in our elections. Four main objectives are worth elaborating. First, surveys are used for measuring figures' popularity as a basis for nomination in national and local elections, and also for political parties' leadership successions. For examples, the nomination of Joko Widodo as presidential candidate was not so straightforward especially for the PDI-P chairwoman Megawati Soekarnoputri, until consecutive survey results showed that Joko Widodo topped the lists of every survey results on presidential candidacy eight to ten months ahead of the election. Furthermore, the nomination of Democrat Party leadership was based on—along with other criteria—survey results. Surveys play an information-gathering role to help political parties in decision making. This can be called pre-election function.



**Tabel 2: Survey Organizations in Indonesia**  
(Quoted from <http://persepi.org/index.php/members>)

No	Nama Institusi	Alamat	Pengurus	Website
1	Alvara Research Center	Sarana Jaya Building- Tebet Barat	Hassanudin Ali	<a href="http://alvara-strategic.com/">http://alvara-strategic.com/</a>
2	Charta Politica Indonesia	Jl. Cipaku 11 no 18 - Jakarta	Yunarto Wijaya	
3	Cirus Surveyor Grup		Andrinof A. Chaniago	<a href="http://cirus-sg.or.id/">http://cirus-sg.or.id/</a>
4	CSIS	Jl. Tanah Abang III No. 23-27	J. Kristiadi	<a href="http://www.csis.or.id/">http://www.csis.or.id/</a>
5	Forum Akademisi IT (F.A.I.T)	Bandung-Jawa Barat	Hotland Sitorus	
6	Indikator Politik Indonesia	Jl. Cikini V no 15 A Menteng -	Burhanuddin Muhtadi	<a href="http://indikator.co.id/">http://indikator.co.id/</a>
7	INSPIRE		Eko Indrayadi	
8	Indobarometer	Jl. Tebet Barat Dalam IV No. 13,	Muhammad Qodari	<a href="http://www.indobarometer.com/">http://www.indobarometer.com/</a>
10	Lembaga Survei Indonesia	Jl.Lembang Terusan D57	Kuskridho Ambardi	<a href="http://www.lsi.or.id/">http://www.lsi.or.id/</a>
11	Lentera Data Riset		Yeni Deswira	
12	Losta Institute Yogyakarta	Komplek Purimas Bandara No. 1C, Jl. Candi Sambi Sari KM 1,	Utuh Munjung Jermia Taedini, M.Si	<a href="http://www.lostinstitute.co.id/">http://www.lostinstitute.co.id/</a>
13	LSIN		Ali Syukron	
14	Majalah Indonesia 2014		Bekerja sama dengan LSI	
15	PEDOMAN RISET		Fadjoel Rachman	
16	Political Communication Institute		Heri Budianto	
17	Politica Wave	Jl. Casablanca Raya Kav. 88	Sony Subrata	<a href="http://www.politicawave.com/">http://www.politicawave.com/</a>
18	Polmark Indonesia	Jl. Raya Patal Senayan Blok C/19-	Eep Saefulloh Fatah	<a href="http://www.polmarkindonesia.com/">http://www.polmarkindonesia.com/</a>
19	Polling Indonesia	Victoria Building-Jl Sultan	Fadhiya Winadi	<a href="http://www.polling-center.com/">http://www.polling-center.com/</a>
20	Poltracking Indonesia	Jalan Salak 26, Setiabudi, Jakarta Selatan 12980	Hanta Yuda	<a href="http://poltracking.com/">http://poltracking.com/</a>
21	Populi Center	Jl. Letjen S. Parman Kav 4-	Nico Harjanto	<a href="http://www.populicenter.org/">http://www.populicenter.org/</a>
22	PPIM-UIN	CIPUTAT	Jajat Burhanudin	
23	Pusat Data Bersatu		Prof. Didik J Rachbini	
24	PusdeHAM Surabaya	Surabaya-Jawa Timur	Mahmud	
25	P2P-LIPI	Gedung Herbarium-Jl Ir. Djuanda	LIPI	
26	SMRC	Jl. Kusuma Atmaja No 59-Jakarta	Saiful Mujani	

Second, surveys are used to map public opinion on the issues of public concerns so parties can design strategic political campaigns such as speeches, advertisements, talk show, and press-releases with messages tailored to offer solutions to what have been the public concerned about. Third, surveys are used to track the electability of candidates either by political parties or independent survey organizations as a form public participation in the election. Fourth, surveys are used to predict the results of elections. In the process of the surveys administration, scientific rules dominate decision making process as to achieve not only reliability and credibility of the results, but also efficiency and effectiveness at the same time.

Often time, survey experts also act as campaign consultants for certain candidates and political parties. We can learn from the latest national elections that some of the prominent survey organizations are consultants of the candidates competing in the presidential election.

The driving force behind the huge immersion of survey technique in the political decision making is not only as the effect of political adaptation from the west, but more of the weakening position of political parties in the society. The rampant corruption cases implicating elites of political parties and members of the House of Representative becomes the most striking influence on the popularity of political parties. The other factor is homogenization of political parties' identities and lack of consistency between political platforms and actions. Ideology is not so easy to identify in the political parties for the last ten years. It gets much worse when trying to correlate between their programs, actions, and ideologies. One way to split one from the others is through the religious and nationalist

distinctions, despite the fact that their political actions seem to be deviating from meaning behind the characteristics. What we have now is a kind of political scientists often single out as catch-all parties. The main goal of political parties in Indonesia today is not so much about ideological basis, grass-root supports, and clear and consistency in their political platforms and actions, but more on the efforts to gather voters as many as possible from the masses when the elections arrive. This fact really shouts out the severe detachment of parties from politics. Sometime parties look more like oligarchic corporates going after profits.

So, a way for political parties to get the public attention is to find what people are like left in the parties. It is individual figure with good popularity and high electability to be offered to the public. Certainly that electability they obtain not because of the organizational development or cadre training, but merely as part of individual quality and struggle in life. Politics have been descending into personalization of politics. Politics is not defined by ideology, value, morality obligation, and grass-root basis in the society, but more by individual political electability. For instance, the presidential election in 2014 was too often depicted as a competition between Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. Personalization of politics is “a change in the presentation of politics in the media, as expressed in a heightened focus on individual politicians and a diminished focus on parties, organizations, and institutions.” (Rahat&Sheafer, 2007: 67).

Personalization of politics has two setbacks to democratic consolidation. First, the news coverage tend to focus more on the private life of the candidates such as family history, and second, the tendency of news media to frame candidates on their individual characteristics such as hobbies, daily routines, and so on, rather than on their professional competence, visions, and programs they fight for.

On the electorate side, rationality in political preferences and intentions has been getting higher, so that voters are not easily controlled by elites or traditional figures often approached by political parties as endorsers, and voters can get the information they need outside of the political structure due to more free and independent media, and the advent of online media.

Direct elections have pushed political parties to relinquish a significant proportion of its power in decision on who to nominate to contest each election. Since 2004, citizens directly choose the names of their leaders during election. Furthermore, since December 2015 simultaneous elections are introduced for the first time for local elections and in 2019 for national elections. This latest transformation in the election system cost political parties losing controls over several steps in the elections, and makes the competition even harder.

The next aspect we can observe of the modernization of election campaigning here is the increasing independence. Independence here means two things which are political parties do not control the whole media system like in the past anymore as we could be called party press, and the loosening oversight of the state over media compared to that of the era of New Order regime. The availability of autonomous structure of communication is also sustained by the presence of online media

However, due to the high involvement of political marketing in the electoral competitions, citizens are not so much involved in the political communication process such as through civic dialogues, public deliberation, volunteerism, and so on. The wide presence of advertisements and administered televised-debates makes citizens more spectators than voters in the real sense.

#### **4. Election campaigning in a fragile local democracy**

Surviving of controversy over its proper time to be commenced, the first simultaneous local elections of this country has been finally declared to take place on 9 December 2015. The General Election Commission (KPU) has approved and formalized 765 pairs of contenders to participate in the upcoming elections, consisting of 9 provinces, 219 regencies, and 33 cities that start campaigning now.

Compared to all other steps in the election—from candidates' registration to votes counting—campaigning which will start from 27 of August to December 5, 2015 is truly the most important period of all. According to the KPU Regulation (PKPU) No. 7/2015 article (4), campaigns should be carried out honestly, openly, and dialogically as to provide responsibly a form of political education to the voters with an expectation that many more citizens will come to the polling stations on the Election Day. Furthermore, in article (5) it is stipulated that methods of the campaigns are clearly described namely open or public debates, distribution of campaign materials, display of attributes, and advertisements in mass media.

If we agree on the advice that experiences are the best teacher, we might need to look back at what has happened during the national elections last year. Reflecting back on it, some matters could still likely to trouble the purity of people's voices in the ballots, and make the local elections more fragile, considering the interwoven between politics with culture, family-politics intersections, and the lesser supervision from the central government.

Fragile means easily broken or damaged. In the context of political institution fragile means failing or at high risk of failing in achieving goals. Furthermore, I define fragility in two layers namely procedurally and substantially. Procedural fragility happens in the form of black campaigns, characters assassination, racist speeches, horizontal clashes, money politics, and so on. Substantial fragility happens when the results of the election that form elected local government that shows a dissatisfactory outcome due to figures with political dynasty, exclusive power, and integrity issue. In short, there is a backward in the quality of election results.

Knowing this fragility, participating candidates, parties, and their campaign teams must create a new style of campaigning in which integrity, respect, honesty, and law are firmly upheld with messages conveyed and strategies utilized totally comply with the rule of law. Electoral bodies (KPU, Bawaslu) should independently oversee the processes closely and take necessary measure immediately whenever needed.

Ideally, campaigns should go interactively and peacefully where dialogues and participations are fully facilitated through the means and formats of the campaigns. Vision, mission, and realistic agendas aimed at improving the life and local people should be elaborated. Furthermore, transparency and honesty in the process should be hailed firmly as a test of commitment before they take power. In addition, too much political advertisements are bad for democracy, but many more interactive dialogues organized by each campaign team besides formal debates mandated by the KPU are good for genuine electoral politics, because our democracy's future lays in rationally self-governed participations of the people.

So, one important effort that should be done to achieve quality election is series of inclusive voter education. Voters should be rationally aware of the candidates they choose in terms of their leadership, competence, and integrity based on what they have done in their lives.

In the end, let the best candidate be won and the people celebrate their victory. To build a strong nation it should develop from its edges. To stay unite as a diverse archipelagic nation even more we should grow from our local regions by building local democracy starting in a new ways of doing voters-enlightening campaigns.

## **5. Research opportunities**

After investigating the latest development in the election campaign literatures, as the main goal of this paper, here I would like to suggest six selected topics in idiosyncratic way as the most important areas to analyze in order to gauge how far modernization of election campaigning has shaped our democracy. It lies along the way with the fundamental elements of communication process (communicator, message, medium, communicant, and effect) in the context of election campaign communication.

### **a. Professionalization of election campaign**

This topic tries to investigate how the presence of political consultants and the deep utilization of pollsters shape the way electoral processes in recent elections and ahead, from the way candidate selected, messages delivered, and campaign strategies chosen. A general rule known for candidacy for most political contests starts with visibility review of potential candidates, and then popularity check of the candidates using survey, hoping to guarantee promising electability. Somewhere in between, political marketing-supported campaigns are staged to increase the score in respective measurement.

### **b. Personalization of campaign**

How candidates are portrayed in the news during campaigns is the second compelling topic to study. Ideally, candidates should be given chance to explore and disseminate their political agendas and policy preferences if they get elected. Competence, integrity, and past track-records are issues worth covering and presenting from the contesting candidates to the people. However, under the reign of media logic, where

political processes are dependent on the media self-interest and routines, media tend to go after the personal and private matters of the candidates. Hence, two central concepts to observe in the news coverage are individualization and privatization.

c. Horse-race framing of campaign

What are the main news frames during campaigns? This question leads us into the issue of how media should play its roles during election campaigning. As a medium for political communication media should facilitate candidates to disseminate their visions, missions, and programs to the people and be available to the wider public. As a watchdog body media should be critical towards the much polished public appearances and speeches of candidates. Media should also provide conflicting perspective over the issues related to candidates or parties. In the end, voters can enjoy information needed to make sound and rational decision. Unfortunately, media are also driven by economic forces that tend to multiply benefits from its news program activities. In order to increase its rating, media tend to emphasize more on the competition side of the election such as focusing on the survey results, who is ahead and who is behind at the polling, what strategies are used by each sides of the contenders, and so on. At the same time, visions, missions, and programs tend to be overlooked by the media, let alone allocating its airtime for independently being critical against all candidates.

d. Comparing the channels of campaign

Parties and candidates can choose various campaign communication channels today. An interesting issue to analyze is which parties and candidates apply which communication channels and compared among them including the messages between candidates to the others, and then compared level of utilization of various media with electoral success after election. As of today, the most parties and candidates apply simultaneously between direct and indirect media, with still low penetration into the online media.

e. The effects of political campaigns:

The last area of research in the field of election campaign communication is campaign effect. A variable to start with is investigating the type of campaign either mediated or direct campaign. How mediated campaigns are done and compared to the direct ones, and measuring the effects of each type of the campaign by using experimental method in the field or lab worth pursuing. Expected results are such as which type of campaign contributes to the rational votes and higher participation in the election, and vice versa.

f. Political branding

Branding is probably the latest phenomenon in our electoral politics today. As modernization of political campaigns becomes strong, the management of campaign involves political consultants and marketing expert to create brands what will boost the public awareness and association of nominated candidates. In research,

measuring brand identities, brand awareness, brand association, and brand personality of candidates is worth pursuing.

## **6. Methods in political campaign research**

Main methods in election campaign communication research are content analysis, survey, and experiment. Each method indicates the locus of the problem under investigation. Content analysis is mainly used to quantify the frequency and trend of candidates and parties being portrayed by the media either by print, broadcast, or online, or to see the pattern of candidates' political messages during campaigns. By definition content analysis is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matters) to the context of their use." (Krippendorff, 2004: 18). A more classic definition by Berelson (1952: 18) states that "content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."

The second commonly used method is survey intending to measure media effects. Survey research is one method of collecting, organizing and analyzing data" (de Vaus, 1991: 7), "using predominantly questioner or by structured interview on more than one case and at a single point in time in connection with two or more variables which are to detect patterns of association" (Bryman, 2008: 46). Similarly, experiment is also applied for measuring the effect of certain campaign communication on subjects by providing altered treatment upon selected group or experimental group, either in the setting of field or laboratory experiment with diverse variation in its administration.

## **7. Conclusion**

Political campaigns contribute significantly to the success and failure of a democracy including consolidating democracy like ours. As Swanson and Mancini (1996: 2) put it: "The way in which a democracy conducts its election campaigns can empower or silence particular segments of the electorate, achieve or disrupt a balance of power among institutions of government, support or undercut the strength of political parties, and foster public support or alienation from government." Like elsewhere, liberal democracy is sustained through periodic elections to elect new government and other public positions to hold the public officials accountable to the people. Campaigning in direct elections conducted in almost all level of public offices in this country are the determining factors to the success and failure of the succeeding government and officials. Campaign is the heart of every credible democracy.

Today, Indonesia has been facing a modernization of political campaigns which brings challenges for the electorates, candidates, and political parties as well. Voters are bombarded with new style of campaigning that makes it difficult for them to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate candidates due to the highly orchestrated political marketing run by candidates, parties, and their consultants. For the candidates the challenges come from internal competition as a consequence of the direct elections implemented. However, political

parties would face same old competition but with much harder to be won especially for middle and small parties when the involvement of money is extremely praised.

Serious studies are urgently needed to investigate the transformation of political campaigns in Indonesia since the reformation era in order to eliminate detrimental effects on the consolidation of democracy, more than that is to empower citizens in facing the powerful political parties when it comes to competing for the power. Some research topics are offered to start the endeavor namely professionalization of election campaign, personalization of campaign, horse-race framing of campaign, comparing the channels of campaign, and the effects of campaign, and political branding both online and offline as means to evaluate the effectiveness of campaigns in supporting democratic elections in our democracy.

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